



# The De-Stress Press

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## The Western New York Stress Reduction Program Newsletter

3359 Broadway, Cheektowaga, NY 14227

*Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it. ~ Rabindranath Tagore~*

### HEALING AFTER HELPING: AN EMERGENCY RESPONDER'S PATH TO RECOVERY AFTER 9/11

*"I became more emotional. My attitude with my family, significant others and at work was inappropriate. I lost sensitivity for things important to others. Mundane responsibilities were not given the level of attention necessary because I perceived them as unimportant. I began eating and gambling compulsively and I lied to others about what I was doing. The decision to begin counseling occurred about one year following my deployment in NYC."*



The above statements were told to one of the Stress Reduction Program volunteers who had the privilege to speak with one first responder who deployed to work in NYC in the aftermath of 9/11. What follows here is the Q & A exchange between the volunteer and the responder:

Q: What was your function while working in NYC?

A: *I served as a representative from my organization to the NYC Emergency Operations Center. My responsibilities included creating Incident Action Plans and interfacing with other agencies.*

Q: How long were you in counseling and how long was it before you began to feel better?

A: *I had significant difficulty finding a counselor, and I gave up a couple times. My attitude during this time didn't help. Initially it didn't seem as if counseling helped, but in retrospect, it was good to have the opportunity to voice many issues in confidence. I was also referred to a psychiatrist and went on medication for a period of time. I attended counseling for a period of 6-8 months. After I stopped counseling, I continued to have difficulty controlling my habits, but I have experienced considerable success in the last several months.*

### Fast Facts

- ❖ PTSD has become the fastest growing disability claim for firefighters and police.
- ❖ The prevalence of PTSD ranges from 15% - 31% for urban firefighters.
- ❖ Since 9/11, St. Vincent's Hospital in NYC continues to provide counseling services to over 20,000 school children, firefighters, office workers and community residents.

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Q: Did you share your decision to attend counseling with others? If so, what was their reaction?

A: *The only person I shared the decision to attend counseling with was my significant other, who was extraordinary in providing me with much needed support.*

Q: What was most helpful in terms of your recovery?

A: *I developed a slide series of WTC photos and used the presentation for training, and invited my family to one of the presentations I gave. I also created a memorial to recognize responders who died on 9/11/01. In addition to these activities, the other things that were effective in helping me recover were: Time and distance, support from family, friends and my significant other, and counseling.*

Q: Would you recommend counseling to others?

A: *Yes, definitely.*

The Western New York Stress Reduction Program would like to thank this very brave responder for having the courage to disclose personal information. Should you need a referral for ongoing care, please call us at 681-6070. Your call will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We have worked diligently in the past year to ensure the provision of ongoing training for our volunteers. Our efforts have resulted in the introduction of two courses developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation: "Assisting Individuals in Crisis" and "CISM: Group Crisis Intervention". We also provide relevant training at our general team meetings. The WNYSRP is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence because of our commitment to provide the best possible service to emergency responders. Stay safe and if you need us, call us - we'll be there.  
~ Michael Walters, Executive Director ~



### Holiday Blues

Holidays are typically thought of as times of joy, cheer, and family gatherings. However, for many people it is a time of loneliness and depression. This is often referred to as the "holiday blues". Factors such as unrealistic expectations for the season, increased stress, inability to be with family, changes in daily routines, and over commercialization contribute to the onset of the holiday blues. The good news is that symptoms experienced during this time of the year, e.g., headaches, anxiety, excessive guilt, changes in sleeping and eating patterns and decreased interest in pleasurable activities, are usually short lived and subside after the holiday season is over. Suggestions for coping during this high-stress season include setting realistic goals, maintaining good self-care, doing something for others less fortunate, avoiding too much alcohol, refraining from over spending, and recognizing that feelings of sadness are normal. If you would like more information, please contact us at 681-6070.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful holiday season.

### Training Opportunities

- ❖ February 10 & 11, 2006 : *Assisting Individuals in Crisis*
- ❖ April 14 & 15, 2006: *CISM: Group Crisis Intervention*

For registration information, call Cheryl Kennedy at 829-2975 x 609.

### How to Contact the Team

Information & Education: 716-681-6070

Immediate Assistance:

Erie County: 716-898-3696

Wyoming County: 585-786-8867

Niagara County: 716-433-4482

Website: [www.erie.gov/depts/wnystress](http://www.erie.gov/depts/wnystress)

Email: [wnystress@yahoo.com](mailto:wnystress@yahoo.com)